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AUTHOR Houser, Neil Owen
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ABSTRACT

Classroom management is a course design which seeks to move beyond the almost exclusive emphasis in this subject on the manipulation of student behavior. Socioenvironmental awareness and awareness of the school culture are viewed as a context within which issues of time, physical environment, and behavior management may reasonably be addressed. Additional emphasis is placed on the need for students to develop a personalized classroom management philosophy based on readings and class discussions, practicum teaching experiences, and observations made during the course of their own schooling. This philosophy, viewed always as being in a state of transition, is seen as a construct by which students may begin to organize the many pertinent issues related to this vital area of teacher education. The Classroom Management Course Overview at Washington State University is included. (Author)

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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Neil Owen Houser

Washington State University

College of Education

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Abstract

Classroom Management is a course design which seeks to move beyond the almost exclusive emphasis in this subject on the manipulation of student behavior. Socio-environmental awareness and awareness of the school culture are viewed as contexts within which issues of time, physical environment, and behavior management may reasonably be addressed. Additional emphasis is placed on the need for students to develop a personalized classroom management philosophy based on readings and class discussions, practicum teaching experiences, and observations during the course of their own schooling. This philosophy, viewed always as being in a state of transition, is seen as a construct by which students may begin to organize the many pertinent issues related to this vital area of teacher education.

Preface

Classroom Management has been designed for implementation in W.S.U.'s Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Although the course may be taught prior to, following, or concurrent with a practicum experience, the latter is viewed as the best alternative. It provides students with opportunities to "work through" real life classroom management situations and to practice immediate application. It makes sense that Classroom Management, perhaps more than any other course, should be taught simultaneously with a practicum experience. Every effort should be made to ensure that such is the case so that this, of all courses, does not become theory-bound and removed from context.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Render, Padilla, & Krank (1989) state that claims of effectiveness by proponents of packaged classroom management plans have not been substantiated in research. Canter (1988) and McCormack (1989), on the other hand, are quick to counter that research studies alone do not a rationale make. They cite satisfied teachers and administrative personnel. The truth about the effectiveness of established management strategies undoubtedly lies somewhere in the middle.

Recently, a number of classroom and behavior management plans have been devised, many of which have met with considerable success. Nevertheless, for every "popular" strategy or plan, there seems to be a number of critics who remain unconvinced. The reasons are diverse, complex, and far too numerous for detailed exploration in a document such as this. However, two superordinate causes for this lack of consensus seem apparent:

(1) Contextual factors related to individual students and groups of students are infinitely diverse, complex, and evolutionary in nature. No single model could possibly best meet the needs for each and every purpose and circumstance.

(2) In order to be maximally effective, management strategies must be personalized. This requires a "filtering" of proposed strategies through the teacher's own evolving psycho-social network. Modification and integration of new information with existing schemata is highly possible, but by no means inevitable.

Quite often, proposed strategies are either adopted in whole or rejected entirely. If subscribed to in whole-sale fashion and followed like a recipe, they may indeed work for certain purposes and in certain

circumstances. However, when failing to meet expectations, these methods are just as likely to be abandoned. The purpose of this course is to provide general awareness of classroom management principles and current trends and issues. This necessarily involves an emphasis on integration and adaption based on social context and personal reflection.

Colleges of education have apparently failed to adequately prepare students for successful classroom management. It appears that requisite skills simply have not been attained prior to pivotal student-teaching experiences. Preservice teachers, like all college students, are presumed to have received content area instruction since their earliest encounters with school. This form of instruction often continues throughout the college experience. Additionally, preservice teachers are required to take courses in educational psychology and sociology. Tests and measurements classes are also offered, along with courses designed to teach instructional strategies. However, classroom management courses are notably absent in many teacher education programs. Of all the knowledge required for a successful career in teaching, perhaps none is more crucial than that related to classroom management. Yet, these are often the skills most overlooked in formal program designs.

Preservice teachers have traditionally been expected to acquire these requisite abilities during a sort of "on the job training." It is not necessarily unreasonable to expect that such skills be learned during student teaching; in fact, it may well be argued that this is the most appropriate time and place. The problem is that in addition to providing formative practice, these experiences often result in pivotal summative evaluations as well. While such experiences represent excellent opportunities for "real life" training, it seems rather unrealistic to

assume that management skills will simply "take care of themselves" amidst the jumble of classroom orientation, heavy emphasis on content learning, and the pressures associated with summative evaluation.

The value of this course, then, is that it will serve as an initial classroom management foundation by: (1) providing for an overall awareness of the management related challenges facing classroom teachers, (2) exposing preservice teachers to a variety of existing models and strategies designed for the express purpose of coping with these challenges, and (3) facilitating the development of skills and understandings considered fundamental to the maintenance of a carefully integrated, highly adaptable, personalized classroom management philosophy and plan.

LEARNING OUTCOMES (GOALS)

Unit I: Students will learn basic skills and knowledge for developing overall contextual and environmental awareness of any educational setting into which they might be placed. They will also learn the cognitive and affective advantages of utilizing such information in the classroom. Finally, students will understand the benefits to classroom management, particularly in relation to the issues of motivation and prevention.

Unit II: Students will gain a general awareness of, and strategies for coping with, challenges related to time management in the elementary classroom setting. This includes problems associated with planning, pacing, and timing.

Unit III: Students will develop a general awareness of, and basic strategies for coping with, challenges related to management of the formal educational environment (e.g. school and classroom settings). These challenges include problems associated with the physical environment and situational circumstances which occur therein.

Unit IV: Students will gain an understanding of strategies, principles, and issues considered fundamental to behavior management. They will learn that the nature of the classroom teacher is one which necessarily includes many roles (e.g., teacher, facilitator, friend, counselor, disciplinarian, confidant). Students will also incorporate strategies for "reading their audience", managing direct confrontation, communicating effectively with parents, integrating various models and approaches to behavior management, and performing ongoing meta-evaluation. In addition, they will learn specific motivational strategies and basic applications of behavior modification.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The following statements summarize the major relations depicted in the Classroom Management course overview (figures 1,2, and 3).

1. Classroom Management can be viewed as consisting of four major components: (a) Awareness of context and environment, (b) Time management, (c) Environmental management, and (d) Behavior management. These are by no means considered discrete categories. Rather, they are often highly overlapping and complexly intertwined.
2. Contextual/environmental awareness involves learning about one's self, the students, the community, and the school setting.
   a. Contextual/environmental awareness related directly to the students must encompass peer relations, home environments, and existing perceptions and attitudes related to school and to education (figure 2).
3. Time management includes planning, pacing, and timing considerations which primarily involve the duration, spacing and tempo, and coordination of educational events.
4. Management of the formal educational environment involves attending to physical considerations such as classroom arrangement and resultant situational circumstances.
5. Behavior management consists of exposure to basic strategies, principles, and issues considered essential to <u>most</u> classroom settings. It also includes instruction in a variety of ancillary models and strategies which may be integrated and utilized, in part or in whole, as circumstances dictate.

6. Basic strategies, principles, and issues considered essential to behavior management include: limit-setting and consistent enforcement; an understanding of the multiple roles of a classroom teacher with emphasis on that of classroom leader; effective communication with parents; the "two-choice" principle; meta-evaluation; and confrontation management. Principles of adaptability and integration are also addressed in this section (figure 3).

   a. Behavior modification principles and strategies will be related to the prevention of potentially undesirable behaviors, the elimination of existing undesirable behaviors, and the encouragement and perpetuation of desirable behaviors (figure 3).

   b. Motivation is done by, rather than to, students. However, certain conditions appear conducive to greater student motivation. These conditions include competitive, cooperative, and simulation activities as well as the establishment and maintenance of student-centered learning environments (figure 3).

7. The ancillary models and strategies section introduces popular plans, many of which draw upon basic principles of behavior modification and motivation. Representative discipline models will be selected from two categories which Curwin & Mendler (1988) have referred to as "obedience models" and "responsibility models". Specific examples include, among others, the Assertive Discipline Model (Lee Canter) and the Reality Therapy approach (William Glasser).

Other important relationships among the various components should be noted. Making these explicit on the conceptual maps would have generated undue confusion; however, these relationships are represented in the following statements:

* First and foremost, components represented on the conceptual maps are by no means discrete or conclusive. Rather, they represent but a fraction of the highly complex elements and relationships inherent to classroom management. This notion will be reinforced implicitly and explicitly throughout the course.
* The hierarchies depicted in the conceptual maps should be viewed as progressing from broad, inclusive catagories to those which are more specific and less inclusive. <u>These hierarchies in no way represent prioritization according to importance</u>. For example, considerable emphasis is placed on behavior modification and motivation, both located well down on the conceptual hierarchy.
* Special attention will be given to the issues of integration and adaptation of management strategies based on contextual and environmental circumstances. The overriding factors are concern for the creation and maintenance of manageable classroom environments and for the academic growth of the students.
* Prevention and motivation are particularly important components which are related to virtually every aspect of classroom management. They will be attended to in great detail.

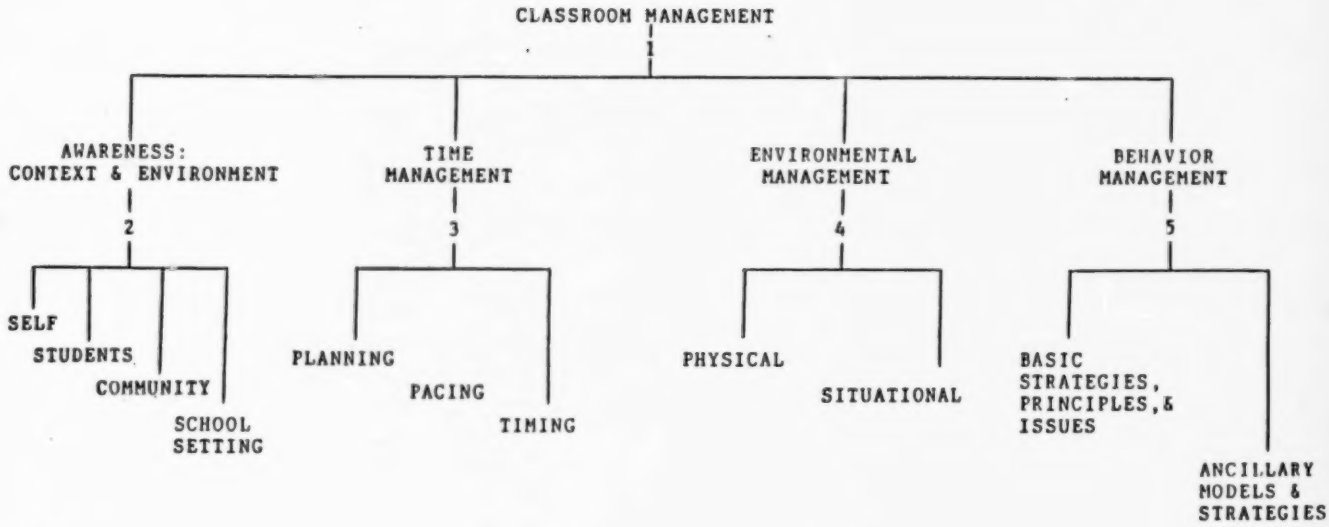

Figure 1. Classroom Management Course Overview

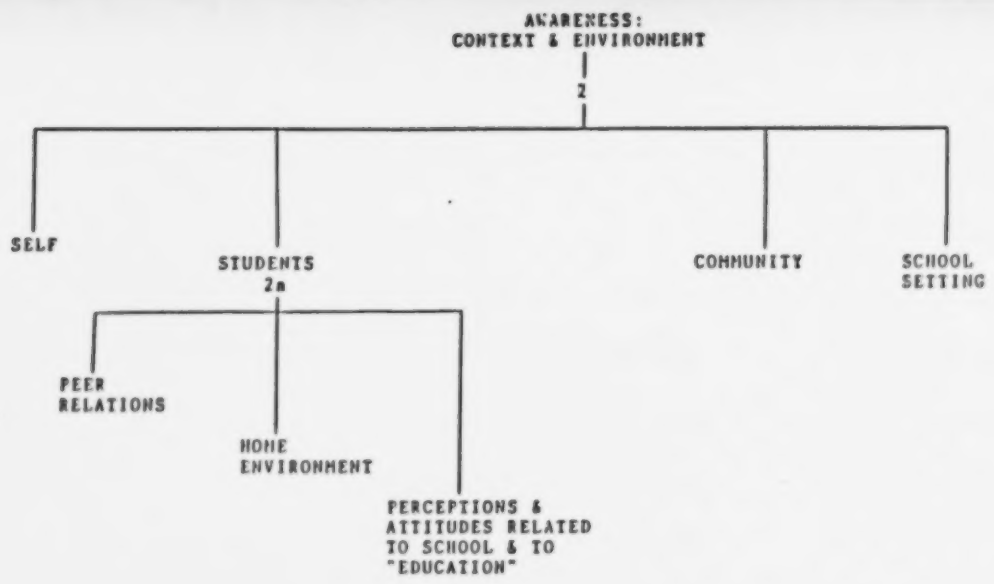

Figure 2. Classroom Management Course Overview (Detail)- Awareness: Context & Environment

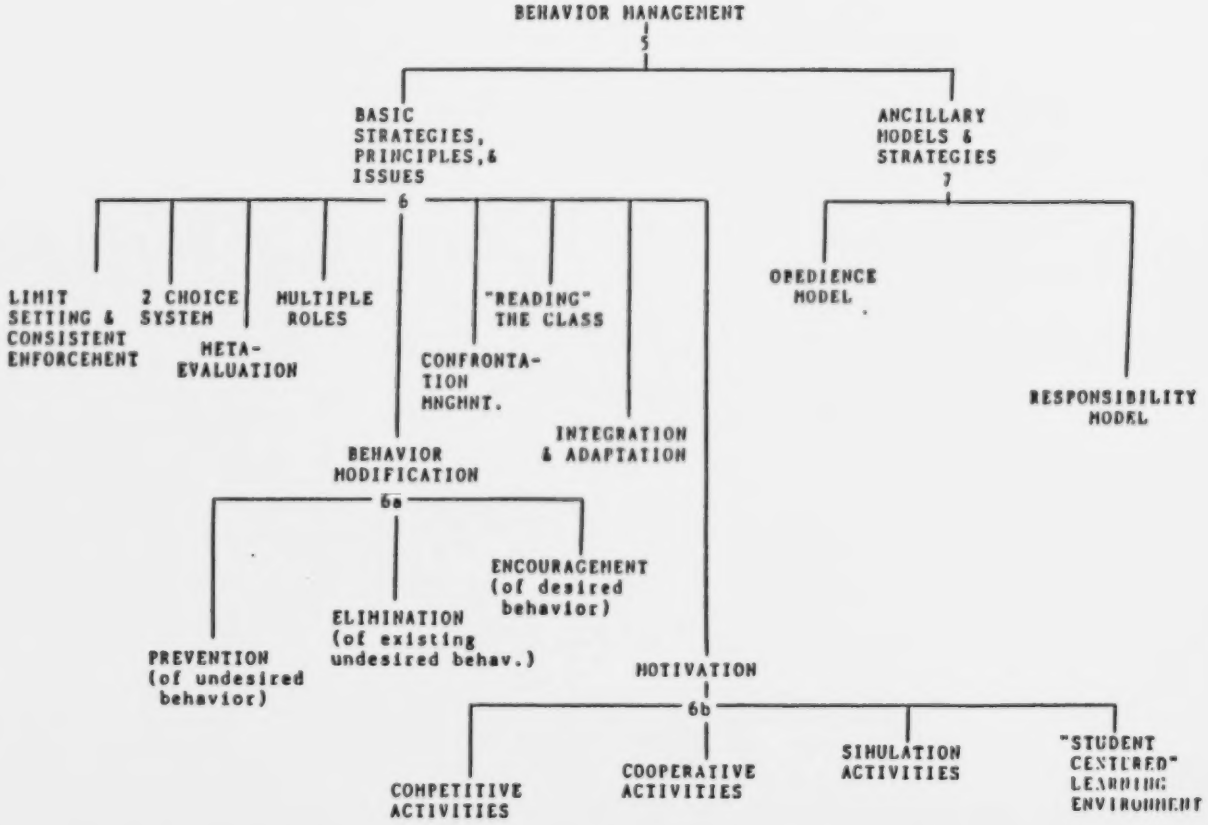

Figure 3. Classroom Management Course Overview (Detail) - Behavior Management

UNIT OVERVIEW

The course is divided into four units. With the exception of Unit I (Awareness), the sequence represents a recommended, rather than essential, chronological order. Although theoretical and conceptual groundwork are necessary, the primary focus is on application. Therefore, modeling, role playing, discussion, analysis, and evaluation will comprise the central instructional foci. Case studies, lecture-discussion, and cooperative learning will also be used.

Role Playing: Role playing represents one of the primary instructional strategies of the classroom management course. A cycle of scenario, role play, analysis, evaluation, adjustment and further role play will characterize all such activities.

A reciprocal teaching approach will be implemented. Students will eventually be expected to conduct role play sessions on their own. This measure is intended to help assure independent and ongoing application of the role playing strategy.

INTRODUCTION (One Session)

The introductory session will consist of the administration of a needs assessment and an interest inventory. It will also include acquaintance activities and a course overview. Information gathered from this session will help to determine the relative instructional weighting of each of the four major units and their constituent parts.

UNIT I: AWARENESS: CONTEXT & ENVIRONMENT

To attempt to implement <u>any</u> classroom management strategy without first getting to know the unique characteristics of one's self, the students, the community, and the school setting is ill-advised. Practitioners who attempt such a feat, whether related to time issues, environmental issues, or

student behavior, presume either to know or not to care about the interests, attitudes, perceptions, and concerns of the local educational community.

The purpose of this unit is to provide preservice teachers with the understanding, the skills, and a sense of necessity for gaining overall contextual and environmental awareness of any educational setting into which they might be placed. The unit will comprise approximately 25% of the total course.

Teaching Strategies:

Students will participate in self-awareness activities designed to help them gain clear understanding of their own traits and tendencies in relation to classroom management.

Students will informally interview a community member, a teacher or school staff member, and a student. They will design their own interview questions with the purpose of gaining insight into the general interests and education related attitudes, perceptions, and concerns of the community. Students will analyze their findings and discuss implications for instruction and classroom management.

Students will read related articles and discuss them in small group and whole class settings.

UNIT II: TIME MANAGEMENT

Planning educational events with attention to pacing, spacing, duration, and coordination is a skill which is mastered (at best) only after years of classroom experience. However, these skills have direct implications for the management of behavior, so they will be included in the spirit of building general awareness. This unit will comprise approximately 10-15% of the total course.

Teaching Strategies:

Students will be asked to recall their own educational experiences and reflect upon and discuss them with respect to planning, pacing, and timing issues.

Students will role play teaching situations in which time management problems occur.

Students will read and discuss related articles.

UNIT III: ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

The purpose of this unit is to provide preservice teachers with basic awareness of, and skills for coping with, potential problems related to environmental management. This includes the physical classroom environment and situational circumstances which occur within in it. Examples include, but are by no means restricted to: (1) seating arrangements and subsequent behavioral problems or breakdowns in teacher/student communication, (2) disruptive intercom announcements, and (3) "pullout" of students at the most "inconvenient" moments, seemingly for the most "trivial" of reasons. This unit will comprise approximately 10-15% of the total course.

Teaching strategies:

Students will recall their own classroom experiences related to environmental situations. Students will analyze and evaluate these experiences in small group and whole class discussions.

Students will role play teaching situations in which environmental management problems arise.

Students will read and discuss related articles.

UNIT IV: BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Without an effective strategy for the management of classroom behavior, many first-year teachers never make it to their second year. An underlying premise of this course is that the most effective plans are necessarily unique to purpose and circumstance and must ultimately be grounded in personalized philosophy. This position by no means diminishes the need for a thorough understanding of existing theories and philosophies.

Behavior management has been an issue of concern to educators for decades. Human behavior is a highly complex phenomenon which cannot be removed from environment and context and studied in isolation. Behavior is not only determined by, but is in part a product of, the environment. A course such as this could not begin to address the multitude of elements and issues which are known to relate to student behavior, let alone those which remain undisclosed.

The purpose of this unit, then, is to provide a very general structural framework from which preservice teachers may begin to grasp the range of behavioral phenomena facing classroom teachers. Students will explore several of the most fundamental principles, strategies, and issues related to behavior management. The intention is that this will serve as part of a broader base from which an integrated, ever-evolving personal philosophy may develop. A major product of this unit will be the development of a personalized behavior management philosophy and plan. This unit will comprise approximately 50% of the total course.

Teaching Strategies:

Students will call upon their own school experiences and observations, and those of their peers, related to behavior management problems. Students will use these situations to create role playing scenarios for subsequent enactment. The instructor will provide additional scenarios (via video

tape, personal experiences, etc.) to assure that a comprehensive range of situations is encountered.

This unit will involve substantial lecture/discussion in the exchange of information pertaining to various strategies, models, principles, and issues.

Students will engage in small group activities and whole class discussions. They will role play and analyze various scenarios, evaluate existing strategies, and synthesize schemes of their own.

Students will read and discuss related articles.

COURSE EVALUATION

Evidence of Main Effects:

The four synthetic learning outcomes have to do with:

a. Cultivating a general awareness of issues related to classroom management.

b. Learning various strategies and models designed to facilitate effective classroom management.

c. Acquiring the skills necessary to develop a personalized philosophy and plan which address the issues of awareness, time management, environmental management, and behavior management.

d. Gaining an understanding of the necessity for keeping such philosophies and plans flexible, adaptable, and in a perpetual state of evolution.

Judgement on how well these intentions have been actualized will be based upon several criteria:

1. The primary evidence will be found in students' participation in class discussions, the depth of analysis in written assignments, and the extent to which students demonstrate facility in coping with various classroom management situations during role playing activities. Of special note will be the quality of analyses and evaluations related to these activities.

2. Evidence will also be gathered in the form of a personalized classroom management philosophy and plan. This comprehensive project will require analysis, synthesis, and internalization of major components covered in the course.

3. Evidence will be found in students' performance on a comprehensive final examination. The exam will test students' ability to synthesize and apply information learned throughout the course.
4. Students will be required to abstract their personal philosophies into a single paragraph. They will be asked to defend these philosophies against the questions and challenges of classmates and the instructor. This defense will be considered preparation for the scrutiny which may well be encountered during the first years of actual teaching. The defense will serve as an additional measure of the extent to which course intentions have been met.

Conceptual Maps

Figure 1. Classroom Management course overview.

Figure 2. Classroom Management (Detail) - Awareness: Context and Environment.

Figure 3. Classroom Management (Detail) - Behavior Management.

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